

Decision making in commercial fishers: An application of the socio-cognitive model of proactive private adaptation to climate change impacts.

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Background: The socio-cognitive model of proactive private adaptation to climate change provides a framework for understanding and predicting individual adaptation intentions and behaviours. The model suggests that factors such as risk perception, perceived adaptive capacity and objective adaptive capacity influence the formation of adaptation intentions. Few studies have explored the process of decision making in adaptation behaviours of commercial fishers, therefore the aim of this study was to explore if the socio-cognitive model is useful in this population.

Methods: Findings from this study come from a collaborative project between James Cook University, the Commonwealth Scientific Industrial Research Organisation, the Department of Fisheries and Forestry and the Queensland Seafood Industry Association. A sample of 206 commercial fishers operating on the Queensland East Coast completed the survey. Survey items covered demographic information, questions about adaptation and past challenges, and economic information such as income, costs and debt. From this survey items relevant to the socio-cognitive model of proactive private adaptation to climate change impacts were included in the analysis.

Findings: Results of this study provide support for the use of the socio-cognitive model in predicting adaptation intentions of commercial fishers.

Discussion: Applying a decision making model of adaptation (such as the socio-cognitive model used in this study) to individuals in the commercial fishing industry has implications for policy and intervention development. By developing a better understanding of the psychological variables of the model and how they lead to adaptive or maladaptive responses, researchers and policy makers can better design and implement interventions to increase the uptake of adaptive behaviours and inhibit the performance of maladaptive behaviours.